

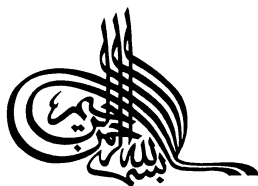
Yahya M. A. Ondigo

My Journey from Christianity to Islam

رحلتي من النصرانية إلى الإسلام



الدار العالمية للكتاب الإسلامي




IN THE NAME OF

ALLAH

THE ALL-COMPASSIONATE, ALL-MERCIFUL



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Christianity to Islam*

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My Journey from Christianity to Islam

رحلتي من النصرانية إلى الإسلام

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الدار العالمية للكتاب الإسلامي

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Pronunciation and Transliteration Chart

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated as:
أ	short 'a', as in <i>cat</i>	a
آ - ع	longer 'a', as in <i>cab</i> (not as in <i>cake</i>)	â
ب	/b/ as in <i>bell</i> , <i>rubber</i> and <i>tab</i>	b
ت	/t/ as in <i>tap</i> , <i>mustard</i> and <i>sit</i>	t
ة	takes the sound of the preceding diacritical mark sometimes ending in h (when in pausal form): ah, ih, or ooh; or atu(n), ati(n) or ata(n) when in uninterrupted speech	h or t (when followed by another Arabic word)
ث	/th/ as in <i>thing</i> , <i>maths</i> and <i>wealth</i>	th
ج	/j/ as in <i>jam</i> , <i>ajar</i> and <i>age</i>	j
ح	a 'harsher' sound than the English initial /h/, and may occur medially and in word-final position as well	ḥ
خ	as in <i>Bach</i> (in German); may occur initially and medially as well	kh
د	/d/ as in <i>do</i> , <i>muddy</i> and <i>red</i>	d
ذ	as in <i>this</i> , <i>father</i> , and <i>with</i>	dh
ر	/r/ as in <i>raw</i> , <i>art</i> and <i>war</i> ; may also be a rolled r, as with Spanish words	r

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated as:
ز	/z/ as in <i>zoo</i> , <i>easy</i> and <i>gaze</i>	z
س	/s/ as in <i>so</i> , <i>messy</i> and <i>grass</i>	s
ش	as in <i>ship</i> , <i>ashes</i> and <i>rush</i>	sh
ص	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /sw/ or /s/ farther back in the mouth	ṣ
ض	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing /d/ farther back in the mouth	ḍ
ط	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing /t/ farther back in the mouth	ṭ
ظ	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing 'the' farther back in the mouth	<u>dh</u>
ع	no close equivalent in English: a guttural sound in the back of the throat	‘
غ	no close equivalent in English, but may be closely approximated by pronouncing it like the French /r/ in 'rouge'	gh
ف	/f/ as in <i>fill</i> , <i>effort</i> and <i>muff</i>	f

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated as:
ق	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing /k/ farther back in the mouth	q
ك	/k/ as in <i>king</i> , <i>buckle</i> and <i>tack</i>	k
ل	/l/ as in <i>lap</i> , <i>halo</i> ; in the word <i>Allah</i> , it becomes velarized as in <i>ball</i>	l
م	/m/ as in <i>men</i> , <i>simple</i> and <i>ram</i>	m
ن	/n/ as in <i>net</i> , <i>ant</i> and <i>can</i>	n
هـ - ه - هـ	/h/ as in <i>hat</i> ; unlike /h/ in English, in Arabic /h/ is pronounced in medial and word-final positions as well	h
و	as in <i>wet</i> and <i>away</i>	w
و (as a vowel)	long u, as in <i>boot</i> and <i>too</i>	oo
ي	as in <i>yet</i> and <i>yard</i>	y
ي (as a vowel)	long e, as in <i>eat</i> , <i>beef</i> and <i>see</i>	ee
ء	glottal stop: may be closely approximated by pronouncing it like 't' in the Cockney English pronunciation of <i>butter</i> : <i>bu'er</i> , or the stop sound in <i>uh</i> — <i>oh</i> !	' (Omitted in initial position)

Diphthongs:

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated as:
أَ ، و	Long o, as in <i>owe</i> , <i>boat</i> and <i>go</i>	au, aw, ow
أَيَ ، يَ	Long 'a', as in <i>able</i> , <i>rain</i> and <i>say</i>	ay, ai, ei

Diacritical marks (*tashkeel*):

Name of mark	Pronunciation	Transliterated as:
fatḥah	very short 'a' or schwa (unstressed vowel)	a
kasrah	shorter version of ee or schwa (unstressed vowel)	i
Dammah	shorter version of oo	u
shaddah	a doubled consonant is stressed in the word, and the length of the sound is also doubled	Double letter
sukoon	no vowel sound between consonants or at the end of a word	Absence of vowel

Arabic honorific symbols used in this book

(ﷲ): *Subhânahu wa ta‘âlâ* — ‘The Exalted’

(ﷺ): *Şalla-Allâhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* — ‘Blessings and peace
be upon him’

(ﷺ): *‘Alayhis-salâm* — ‘Peace be upon him’

(ﷻ): *Raḍiya Allâhu ‘anhu* — ‘May Allah be pleased with him’

(ﷻ): *Raḍiya Allâhu ‘anhâ* — ‘May Allah be pleased with her’

About the word 'Lord'

The word *lord* in English has several related meanings. The original meaning is 'master' or 'ruler', and in this sense it is often used to refer to human beings: 'the lord of the mansion' or 'Lord So-and-So' (in the United Kingdom, for example). The word *Lord* with a capital L is used in the lexicon of Islam to refer to the One and Only God — Allah. In Islam, there is no ambiguity about the meaning of this word. While it is true that one may occasionally use the word *lord* (whether capitalized or not) to refer to a human being, in Islamic discourse the reference of this term is always clear from the context. Whereas for Christians, Hindus and other polytheists, the word *Lord* with a capital 'L' may refer to Allah, to Jesus or to some imagined deity, for Muslims, there can be no plurality of meaning. Allah alone is the Lord, and the Lord is Allah — not Jesus, not Rama, not any other being.

The Editor

Dedication

*T*his work is dedicated to every sincere seeker of truth. May Allah (*Subhânahu wa Ta'âlâ* — Glorified and Exalted is He) by His boundless Grace, guide all those who are seriously and sincerely seeking the truth through this soul-elevating journey, *âmeen*.

Publisher's Note

All praise and thanks belong to Allah alone, the One, the Almighty, and All-Merciful. Blessings and peace be upon Prophet Muhammad, the last of His Messengers and Prophets, and upon his family, his Companions and all those who follow in his footsteps until the end of time.

Each person who was raised in a religion other than Islam, and then who discovers and embraces Islam, has his or her own unique story to tell about the 'journey to Islam'. *My Journey from Christianity to Islam* is Yahya Ondigo's personal and yet universal story. Interestingly, Brother Yahya was raised in a strict Christian household, studied the Bible in great detail, and thought that Muslims were heathens who needed salvation. Readers — Muslims and non-Muslims alike — will find this account of how he came to Islam in spite of himself to be engaging and thought-provoking.

May Allah accept the efforts of all those who contributed to the production of this book, and may it be acceptable to Him, *âmeen*.

Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Mohsin Al-Tuwaijri

Managing Director

International Islamic Publishing House

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Introduction

*T*his, by the Grace of Allah Almighty, is the short story of my journey from Christianity to Islam. Having been born and brought up as a Christian of the Seventh Day Adventist denomination, I had the rare opportunity to experience a Christian way of life for twenty-six years, through which I learnt many things. Then I accepted Islam and studied Islam up to college level as a practicing Muslim. I was therefore happy to accept the request of a Muslim brother, asking me to share my soul-elevating journey from Christianity to Islam.

To my knowledge, not many have had such a unique experience and the blessing of both Islam and Christianity, and even fewer have experienced them on both academic and spiritual levels.

This small and very brief short biography will not only shed light on some fundamental aspects of Islam and Christianity. It also, by the Grace of Allah Almighty, will answer some questions from the many people who may be curious to know exactly what attracted me to Islam or rather what I did not get from Christianity that I found in Islam.

Chapter One

A BRIEF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Childhood to teenage years

I was born in a very strict Christian home of the S.D.A. (Seventh Day Adventist) denomination. I grew up in a place called Kisumu in Kenya where I took my primary, secondary and high school education, after which I joined the Kenyan Armed Forces.

During our childhood and teenage years, our parents always took us to church on Saturday, but the day before church services, that is on Fridays, at sunset, we always stopped doing any work and dedicated all the time left until midnight reading and studying the Holy Bible, singing different hymns like *The Rock of Ages* and praying to God through Jesus Christ. Our family was very strict in moral values and dietary laws. There was no smoking, drinking of alcohol, dating, listening to music, watching movies or going to theatres.

Our parents were intent on raising us as devout and responsible people who would be successful in life and care for others. As a matter of fact, our parents were so serious about Christianity that they named us all after the prophets mentioned in the Bible. Even our sisters were named after the wives of the prophets. Our parents always gave their tithes, that is, ten percent of their total earnings, to the church where we attended our Saturday services. Also, at the end of every month, they invited the church leaders (pastors and reverends) for dinner combined with special prayers and sometimes ten o'clock tea and special prayers, after which the leaders would take the tithes.

Inheriting religion as a birthright

In this way, we came to inherit the religion of our parents, who always struggled to give us the best education and spared much of their time especially from Friday sunset till Saturday sunset wherein they developed us spiritually. As we continued with the church services and reading/studying the Bible as well as attending monthly visits by the church leaders as a family, I and my brothers started questioning certain discrepancies that we felt were not reasonable or logical. For example, we always questioned the pastors on issues of the Trinity: *How could Jesus be God and Man simultaneously? If Christ was crucified for our sins, then why are we still sinning? or, Why should we seek repentance if the price has been paid at Calvary by Jesus Christ?* — and the like. Believe it or not, they never provided any adequate answers! When we insisted on getting answers, they would retort back, *“You are demon possessed, Satan has gone into your heads, you should not question the Bible or the church. Just believe!”*

We were a big family and my parents were very poor, so after finishing my high school education I decided to join the Kenyan army without the knowledge of my parents but with consultation with my eldest brother who approved it. By now, father was very far out of our reach working in the North Eastern Province of Kenya, trying to make ends meet. Mother was also struggling in the farm to produce some food for the big family of ten. For this reason, we never informed our parents about my joining the army. Mother would never have accepted the idea, for she always worked hard with the intention of sending me to university, especially since none of her children had made it to university till then.

Recruitment and military training

I managed to be recruited into the military, my intention being to help bear the responsibility of educating my younger brothers. Subsequently I was trained as an Officer Cadet for one year. The training was not easy at all. At one time during the military training, I ran away back home but nobody accepted my running away. My parents in particular, unequivocally said that since I had discontinued my studies and joined the military on my own accord, I had no business coming back home.

My eldest brother whom I had consulted before joining the forces was very harsh and cross with me. He also told me in very clear terms to go back to the military training camp for there was absolutely nothing I could do at home. And so the ball was now in my court. If I stayed at home I would be considered a complete failure in life and would not be able to help my younger brothers with their education as I had intended.

For two days I was deep in thought, evaluating the difficulties involved in the remaining part of the military training and the financial situation at home. At long last, I decided I had no choice but to go back and accept the punishment that was awaiting me at the military training camp for absconding training and leaving the camp without official leave, which is known as AWOL (absent without official leave).

I went back to the training and took the responsibility of AWOL by accepting the punishment gracefully and carried on with the training, of which I had barely completed three months. There were still nine more tedious months to go. However, I soldiered on until I finished the training and graduated as a Second Lieutenant in 1986 from the Kenyan Armed Forces Training College in Nakuru.

Military service

Thereafter, I was posted to Nairobi's Lang'ata barracks, which then attached me to a military outpost in the North Eastern Province, an area which was majority Muslim. This area, famously known as NEP, was very notorious for banditry activities, the reason being its arid and semi-arid land with very poor infrastructure. Roads in this area are almost impassable, there is no clean water, no electricity, no social institutions such as good schools, hospitals and the like. As such, there were no adequate economic activities that would support human growth and development. The area had in fact, been forgotten by the Kenyan government and even to date, it remains thus.¹

The area where I was the commander, known as Takaba, a small village almost bordering Ethiopia near a town called Moyale, is a particularly dry area with virtually no human economic activity except for a few herds of goats, sheep, and camels. Yet even these animals, like human beings, are always going far and wide in search of water for survival.

I used to be given a weekly ration of food by the Buffalo Military Aircraft that supplied all the military camps in the region once a week. However, other than these supplies, I had under my command a water buzzer², two five-tonne Mercedes Benz lorries, a Land Rover (FFR) and a signal centre for communication in my camp.

My fellow military officers had nicknamed me 'the territorial commander' because I was far from other camps and I was the boss. I used to send the water buzzer out to collect water for my soldiers at least three times a week and also the two Lorries to collect firewood for cooking. Seeing the poverty-stricken village, also without water, struck my heart and I felt that it was my duty to help the villagers as much as I was able. Therefore the same water buzzer would supply the village with water and the lorries would supply them with firewood and we would also share whatever little supplies of our

rations that we could with the villagers.

Allah Almighty knows best, but I think it is because of this very little humanitarian help to the villagers that Allah put some light of guidance into my heart. Come 1986, I was still nominally a Christian, facing the challenges of military life, an institution where immoralities were rife. Perhaps this was the reason that made my dear loving mother despise that her child join the army. Being much wiser and wanting the best for her children, she automatically knew that the army would corrupt her child, but what was she to do? It was out of her hands!

Chapter Two

FROM MILITARY LIFE TO ISLAM

Life in the military

In the Kenyan army, as in most armies, we were indoctrinated to believe in the three “Ws”: wine, women and war. Despite this, I still believed in God and kept going to church, if only occasionally. At this time my parents did not get as much help from me as they had expected, partly due to my own negligence.

However, my father convinced me to get married early in the hope that it would make me more responsible, which I did. At least it calmed me down a bit. Again in 1989, I was sent once more to NEP but this time to a place called Mandera, a town that is not very far away from the Somali border.

Ups and downs of married life

In the meantime, my wife had had several miscarriages and as I was being posted to Mandera she was pregnant once more. In fact, when I was leaving Nairobi for a detachment in Mandera, my wife was only two months pregnant. I had hardly been in NEP for four months when I received a signal message that again, my dear wife had had another miscarriage. This depressed me greatly. I was very demoralized especially when I came to know that it was due to the negligence of those on duty in the Medical Regimental Service (MRS) who were called to attend to my wife. However, because they

were busy enjoying drinking with women at the time, they did not bother to attend to their patient until the next day when my wife had bled so much that the foetus could not be saved.

As fate would have it, and maybe God Almighty was compensating me for my low morale, almost immediately during the same week, I received another signal message from my Nairobi barracks camp. This one informed me that I had been selected among those who were going on a peace-keeping mission to Namibia (South West Africa then) and that I, and other selected soldiers were to report to Nairobi as soon as possible. I came back to Nairobi, consoled my sad wife and gave her courage not to lose hope; after all, I was going out of my country for a peace-keeping mission which would make better money that in turn, would help us raise children that we expected to have in the future.

Military mission in Namibia

In April 1989, we travelled to Namibia for the peace mission, which lasted for one year and three months. We made a lot of money but many soldiers and officers wasted their money on excessive drinking and going out with women and girlfriends without caring about the risk of HIV/AIDS. Well, after all, they were far from their wives for more than a year, which according to them justified their immoral behaviour.

Somehow it dawned on me that I had to take care of my life. I said to myself, *"You can't go on living like this! You must change your life...look at the Muslim soldiers and how disciplined they are, they do not drink or go with girlfriends like the other soldiers...they fast in their month of fasting, they always pray, they are very kind-hearted...always united together as brothers and members of the same family...why don't you be like them and save your money!"* But instead of joining them, I decided to go back to the Bible and read it

more seriously and critically. (Maybe if my soldiers had just told me something about Islam I would have joined them immediately, for I was craving for some guidance to get hold of my life. But alas, they never did!).

A second Baptism

They were too late, for I was taken over by the (CU) Christian Union. I attended church meetings every evening and grew up in the Christian faith. I was baptised once again, this time in the Lutheran Church by a very friendly Dutch pastor who taught me the Bible and often invited me to his home in Windhoek. I became a strong Christian and even started preaching to my soldiers and friends.

I sent letters and pictures home to my parents about my changed life and convictions about Christianity. This really depressed my elder brother who by now had followed our father who had become Muslim from his acquaintance with Muslims in NEP. However, even though our father had long been a Muslim (when we were still in secondary school), his Islam was not based on knowledge but rather on blind imitation of the good lifestyle that he had seen of the Muslims in NEP where he was working as a driver.

Our father never really told us anything about Islam, not because he did not want to, but because he knew very little about it, perhaps only how to pray, and to fast in the month of fasting.

My elder brother had followed my father and joined Islam but was also no better than our father in his knowledge of Islam. Thus when he heard that I had been baptised in the Lutheran church in Namibia and saw the pictures that I had sent back home to mother, he got very disturbed, for he had hoped to convince me and my other brothers to join him.

With the new revelations about my situation in Namibia of having become a strong Christian, it seemed that his hopes had been buried

in the dust! But he never lost hope; instead he wrote me a letter and requested that the best present I could bring for him was the videotapes of the famous Muslim scholar of the Christian Bible: Ahmed Deedat.

Luckily I sent for the tapes three days before our departure from Namibia and just a day before leaving for home, the tapes were delivered on my doorstep in Windhoek. There were 66 videotapes comprising lectures, debates and dialogues on comparative religion.

Back home from the military mission

I arrived home on 5th June 1990 and was warmly welcomed by my parents, brothers, sisters, and my dear wife. It was a great relief to step back into my home after so long. The next day I opened the carton with the 66 videotapes of Ahmed Deedat. My eldest brother was very anxious as this was the long awaited present that he had sent for, so he chose a debate about Christianity and Islam between Ahmed Deedat and a Christian professor from a university in Pretoria. The debate was quite interesting and controversial.

As a Christian at the time, I was on the side of the Christian professor for the whole time while he spoke to defend the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, which, by now, I was well acquainted with. But when the Muslim scholar of the Christian Bible, Ahmed Deedat, stood up and started quoting the Christian Bible from memory, without looking in the Bible, disproving the cardinal doctrines of Christianity one by one, my faith was indeed shaken. I still told my brother that maybe the professor was ill-prepared or maybe he was not good enough to handle the debate. So I proposed that it would be better to choose two or three more tapes from different Christian scholars in dialogue with Deedat.

This time, it was my turn to choose. I went through virtually all the titles and chose a four-hour long dialogue between Deedat and two

very experienced Christian Missionaries, one American and the other British. The four-hour session during the dialogue ended without my realising, for the dialogue was very interesting. It covered virtually all important subjects on Islam and Christianity, ranging from the authenticity of the two books, that is the Bible and the Qur'an, the question of the Holy Trinity, the divinity of Jesus Christ, original sin and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. At the end of the four-hour long dialogue I was convinced beyond any reasonable doubt in my heart about Islam. It did however seem so strange to me. I thought, "*How can this be that just yesterday I was so convinced about Christianity and after watching two video tapes lasting six hours, everything about my Christian faith has fallen apart!*" Yet my heart could not let go of the truth, which was revealed to me through these two exciting debates and dialogues. I had to make a decision. But what about my wife, my mother and my job? And how about my Christian friends, what was I to tell them?

There were just too many questions lingering in my mind, all of which needed immediate answers. *What was I to do?* The truth about Islam was pounding in my heart; all doubts and questions about illogical issues in Christianity had been well addressed by Deedat in the question and answer sessions of the debates and dialogues. The ball was in my court! Before the end of the day, that afternoon, 6th June 1990, I made the most difficult and momentous decision in my life and took the *shahâdah*³ (embraced Islam) in front of my eldest brother, a decision that later was to change my whole worldview about life and the purpose of creation. It was indeed a momentous decision.

Chapter Three

JESUS NEVER TAUGHT CHRISTIANITY

Serious studies in comparative religion

I became very serious about my decision to embrace Islam, spent most of my time reading, and watched all the 66 video tapes of Sheikh Ahmed Deedat making sure I took down notes as I watched. In less than a year, I became well acquainted with comparative religious studies between Islam and Christianity. By then, I had taught myself the basics of Islam through the famous book called “*Islam in Focus*” by Hammudah Abdalati. Through my studies of Islam and Christianity, I found that the cardinal doctrines of Christianity that I had learned in the Christian Church were actually never taught by Jesus Christ (*‘Alayhi as-salâm* — peace be upon him).

The holy Trinity

I was taught by my parents and the church that there were three separate and distinct Divine Persons in Godhead, that is, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Athanasius Creed, as taught in the Church, read,

There is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one; the glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal... The Father is God, the Son is God, and the

Holy Spirit is God. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God... For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord, so are we forbidden by the Catholic religion to say there be three Gods, or three Lords.⁴

With much reading and interaction with various books and scholars, in time, this doctrine became quite obviously self-contradictory. It is like saying one plus one plus one is three, yet it is also one. If there are three distinct Divine Persons and each is God, then logic dictates that there must be three Gods. There was never any logical answer given by the church leaders about the belief in the three Divine Persons within the Oneness of God (Godhead). Hence the Church, recognising the impossibility of harmonising the three Gods into one, declared the Holy Trinity a mystery that a believer has to follow blindly without question. This is what the Rev. J. F. De Groot wrote in his book *Catholic Teaching*,

The Most Holy Trinity is a mystery in the strictest sense of the word. For reason alone cannot prove the existence of a Triune God, Revelation teaches it. And even after the existence of the mystery has been revealed to us, it remains impossible for the human intellect to grasp how the Three Persons have but one Divine Nature.⁵

Through a careful reading and study of the Holy Bible, I found that Jesus Christ (✠) actually never even mentioned the word Trinity, let alone teach it, as is purported by the church pastors. In fact, Jesus (✠) said nothing about there being three Divine Persons in Godhead. If anything, his understanding of God was no different from the earlier Israelite prophets, who had always preached the unity of God and never, at any time, taught about the Trinity. As a matter of fact, while Jesus (✠) was reasoning with the Pharisees and Herodians, who were sent to catch him out with his own words, someone came and questioned him as follows,

And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" And Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but He. (Mark 12:28-32 KJV)

So Jesus (✠), like his predecessor prophets, believed in only One Divine Person, One God, as we find in his reply to the devil when he came to test him with worldly luxuries, promising him the whole world's kingdom. Jesus answered him and said,

Then saith Jesus unto him, get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. (Matthew 4:10 KJV)

The truth of the matter, which today is known by many, is that the Christians coined the Holy Trinity about three hundred years after Jesus. The four Canonical Gospels, written between 70 and 115 C.E. (Christian Era), contain virtually nothing in reference to the Trinity. Even *The New Catholic Encyclopaedia* (bearing the Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur, indicating official approval) admits that the doctrine of the Trinity was unknown to the early Christians and that it was formulated in the last quarter of the fourth century,

It is difficult in the second half of the 20th century to offer a clear, objective, and straightforward account of the revelation, doctrinal evolution, and theological elaboration of the mystery of the Trinity. Trinitarian discussion; Roman Catholic as well as others; present a somewhat unsteady silhouette. Two things

have happened. There is recognition on the part of exegetes and Biblical theologians, including a constant growing number of Roman Catholics that one should not speak of Trinitarianism in the New Testament without serious qualification. There is also the closely parallel recognition on the part of historians of dogma and systematic theologians that when one does speak of an unqualified Trinitarianism, one has moved from the period of Christian origins to, say, the last quarter of the fourth century. It was only then that what might be called the definitive Trinitarian dogma 'one God in three persons' became thoroughly assimilated into Christian life and thought.⁶

Elsewhere, the same Encyclopaedia asserts even more emphatically saying,

The formulation 'one God in three persons' was not solidly established into Christian life and its profession of faith prior to the end of the 4th century. But it is precisely this formulation that has first claim to the title of the Trinitarian dogma...Among the Apostolic Fathers, there had been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective.⁷

I found that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity was never taught by Jesus Christ (✝); moreover it was nowhere to be found in the Bible, neither in the Old nor the New Testament. It was completely foreign to the mentality and perspective of the early Christians; rather, it only became entrenched into the Christian faith as late as the end of the fourth century. Easton's Bible Dictionary affirms this fact when it says about the Trinity,

— A word not found in Scripture, but used to express the doctrine of the unity of God as subsisting in three distinct Persons. This word is derived from the Greek word *trias*, first used by Theophilus (A.D. 168 AD - 183 AD), or from the Latin word *trinitas*, first used by Tertullian (A.D. 220 AD), to express this doctrine. The propositions involved in the doctrine are these:

1. That God is one, and that there is but one God (Deut 6:4; 1 Kings 8:60; Isaiah 44:6; Mark 12:29, 32; John 10:30).
2. That the Father is a distinct divine Person (hypostasis, subsistentia, persona, suppositum intellectuale), distinct from the Son and the Holy Spirit.
3. That Jesus Christ was truly God, and yet was a Person distinct from the Father and the Holy Spirit.
4. That the Holy Spirit is also a distinct divine Person.

It is therefore, rational to conclude that the dogma of Trinity is untenable. It is not just beyond reason and logic but I found that it was repugnant to reason and logic, for if there are three distinct and separate persons, then there must be three distinct separate substances which can never be superimposed into one.

Furthermore, if the three Divine Persons are infinite, then it means there are three distinct Infinities, three Omnipotents, three Eternals, and therefore three Gods. If they are finite, then we are led to the absurdity⁸ of conceiving an Infinite Being having three finite modes of subsistence or three persons who are separately finite making up an infinite conjunctly. However, the fact is that if the three Divine Persons are finite, then neither the Father, nor the Son, nor the Holy Spirit is God.

Thus, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity was a later development that came as a consequence of the deification of two creatures, Jesus Christ (✠) and the mysterious Holy Spirit. This; due to their association with God as partners in His Godhead; was a formula that was invented and used by Athanasius, an Egyptian deacon from Alexandria and subsequently accepted and canonized by the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E. Whether considered from a historical perspective or otherwise, it is a regression from rational theology to mythology. For at the root of all mythologies lies the irrational tendency of the human mind to deify great men and personify non-personal forces and attributes and to present them as Divine Persons.

On the other hand, I found that Islam was the only religion that preached a plain, simple, rational, logical, and radical Unity of God. It presented an understanding of God that was totally free from anthropomorphic or mythological fancies.

I learned in Islam that Allah Almighty was the only unique Creator, Cherisher, Sustainer, and Governor of all that exists, that He is One in Person and One in Substance, the two being indistinguishable. Allah is the only Self-Subsistent One, and the Self-Sufficient who is independent of all needs while all are dependent on Him. He is the Creator and Nourisher of all, the All-Good, the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Loving, the All-Merciful, the Eternal and Infinite. He begets not nor is He begotten. Nothing can come out of Him and then become His equal and partner in Godhead. Whatever one conjures up in one's mind about God, is not God, because there is none like unto Him.

﴿Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begets not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him.﴾

(Qur'an 112: 1-4)

﴿Allah, There is no god but He,-the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permits? He knows what [appears to His creatures as] before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass anything of His knowledge except as He wills. His Throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them, for He is the Most High, the Supreme [in glory].﴾

(Qur'an 2: 255)

The divinity of Jesus Christ (✠)

The second doctrine of Christianity that I discovered to have never been taught by Jesus Christ (✠) was his own divinity. In the Church, we were taught to believe that Jesus was God. In fact the Athanasian

Creed stated, "Furthermore, it is necessary for everlasting salvation that he also believes rightly in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ."

As a Protestant in the S.D.A. church we believed just like the Roman Catholics that Jesus Christ (✠) was God from all eternity, being the second Person of the Holy Trinity and that two thousand years ago Jesus chose to appear in human body and was born of the Virgin Mary. As such, we used to make all prayers and supplication to God through Jesus.

The Godhood of Jesus was asserted in the *Catholic Teaching* in the following words:

This teaching about Christ's divinity which is bound to be found in so many places of the scripture has always been proclaimed by the church as one of the most important truths of the Catholic Faith. The Council of Nicaea, which was the first General Council after the persecutions, solemnly condemned Arius who contended that Christ was not God but a creature.⁹

Going through the words of Jesus Christ (✠) as recorded in the four canonical Gospels, I realised that Jesus in many places strongly disclaimed Godhood and divinity as against what was attributed to him by the church. He stated this in many places as follows,

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. (Mark 10:17-18 KJV)

Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. (John 20:16-17 KJV)

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:1-3 KJV)

So Jesus always talked of “My Father and your Father, and my God and your God.” These words of Jesus (✠) simply meant that he stood in the same relationship to God as any other man. He was a creature of God, and not a God because when he was reported to be in great agony on the cross as recorded in the Gospels, he cried out.

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? Which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Mark 15:34 KJV)

I could not imagine such words coming out of the mouth of God; rather this was the cry of a helpless man in agony addressed to his Creator and Lord seeking help. Moreover I found that there were so many places in the Bible wherein it is recorded that Jesus (✠) prayed to God and beseeched God’s help time and again. Therefore; I thought to myself; if Jesus was really God, how could he pray to another God?

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. (Mark 1:35 KJV)

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, my soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if

it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. (Matt 26:36-39 KJV)

And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, And said unto them, Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. (Luke 22:39-46 KJV)

Furthermore, I was taught in the church that Jesus was born in a stable by the Virgin Mary, he was circumcised after eight days, breastfed by his mother and often ate normal, earthly food when hungry, he cried when in agony, he was a carpenter and he spoke of himself as the son of man. Then how could such a humble person be God, I wondered?

They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, if ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: This did not Abraham. (John 8:39-40 KJV)

I found that, like the concept of the Trinity, the doctrine of the Incarnation (God becoming a man in the form of Jesus to be able to solve man's problems) was also developed long after Jesus (✠). In fact, by going through the Gospels, I could by now trace the stages through which Jesus was gradually deified. In the 'Q'¹⁰ source he was regarded as a prophet of God, as a human being and nothing

more. In 'Urmarcus'¹¹ there was an attempt to glamorise his person and to attribute many miracles to him. In works of the first and second centuries he was presented as a mighty angel, the first born of all creation, but still a creature nevertheless. Finally, in the preface of the Gospel according to John, and other works of the third and fourth centuries, he was made into a God. In fact, it was affirmed in the Nicene Creeds (325 C.E.) in the following words,

I believe in...one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. Born of the Father before all ages. God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God. Begotten not made; being of one substance with the Father.

Those early Christians who still did not proclaim their belief in the divinity of Jesus, as quoted above, would face the sword.

The reasoning I found in Islam could no longer allow me to accept a man who was born of a woman, suffered human shortcomings such as ignorance, had limitations and gradually grew in stature, power and wisdom, like all other human beings, to be God. Thus, to put human limitations upon God and believe in His Incarnation in the human body is to deny the Perfection of God.

Islam liberated me from such illogical and irrational beliefs and dogmas. In a way, Islam opened my eyes and sharpened my capacity to reason. The Qur'an taught me that Jesus (ﷺ) was a great prophet of God — sinless, pure, humble and godly, but like all prophets he was in all respects, a human being. Regarding this, Allah Almighty says in the Glorious Qur'an,

«The similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: Be. And he was.» (Qur'an 3: 59)

«Christ Jesus the son of Mary was [no more than] an apostle of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His apostles. Say not 'Trinity'. Desist; it will be better for you.» (Qur'an 4: 171)

«Christ the son of Mary was no more than an apostle; many were the apostles that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their [daily] food. See how Allah makes His signs clear to them; yet see in what ways they are deluded away from the truth!»

(*Qur'an* 5: 75)

The divine sonship of Jesus (ﷺ)

I was also taught to believe that Jesus Christ (ﷺ) is a Son of God in a special and exclusive sense, that is, that he is the only begotten Son: God begotten, not made. In fact, the most famous verse of the Bible that was used to support this belief is the Gospel according to St. John 3:16-18 which reads,

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:16-18 KJV)

However, I went through Ahmed Deedat's debate with Dr Anis Shorosh (the 'liberated' Palestinian Christian who has a doctorate in divinity) entitled "Is Jesus God?" I found that this dogma of Jesus being the only begotten Son of God also did not conform to the sayings and teachings of Jesus Christ (ﷺ), son of Mary. Furthermore, I found that in the Bible this expression "Son of God" had also been used in reference to many earlier prophets such as Jacob, David, Solomon, Adam and others.

And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn. (Exodus 4:22 KJV)

I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. (Psalms 2:7 KJV)

He shall build a house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever. (1 Chronicles 22:10 KJV)

Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God. (Luke 3:38 KJV)

Thus, the phrase “Son of God” meant nothing more than nearness to God in love and piety. Jesus himself taught in no uncertain terms, that whoever was committed to God by fulfilling His Will, lived a devout life with a beautiful conduct of behaviour of kindness and mercy to fellow human beings, deserved the title “Son of God”. Jesus Christ, son of Mary said:

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matthew 5:44-45 KJV)

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called Sons of God. (Matthew 5:9 ASV)

These sayings of Jesus Christ, son of Mary, left no doubt in my mind that the phrase “Son of God” meant for Jesus, (since before him Adam, Israel (Jacob), David, Solomon and others had been called the “Sons of God”) to mean those who were close to God in love and piety. Therefore, when Jesus occasionally referred to himself as the Son of God (though most of the time he referred to himself as son of man), it was no doubt in the same sense in which the earlier prophets were referred to, that is in a metaphorical sense.

A very interesting incident took place in the time of Jesus (✝), connected with the two doctrines regarding the divinity and the divine Sonship of Jesus Christ, son of Mary. The Jews accused him

of blasphemy against God, by which one would infer that he had in fact claimed to be God. As a Christian, I had been taught that Jesus was God Incarnate, meaning he had a right to be God and therefore there was no blasphemy, so Jesus clarified himself with his words:

It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no-one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one." Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God." Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, I have said, 'You are gods'? If he called them 'gods', to whom the word of God came — and the scripture cannot be broken — what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'?" (John 10:22-36 NIV)

Our pastors in the church; while trying to prove to us that Jesus was indeed God and Son of God; always used verse 30 of John Chapter 10. However, it was never read within the context of verse 23 through 34. When it is understood within the context, it becomes clear that what Jesus meant was neither the false accusation of the Jews against him of blasphemy nor the Christian belief in his being God. Rather, Jesus was one with God in purpose not in Divinity, it was a oneness of purpose rather than of Godliness.

This is because the Jews only misunderstood him claiming to be God when he said, “I and my Father are one.”

Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?”

“We are not stoning you for any of these,” replied the Jews, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”

Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, I have said, ‘You are gods’? If he called them ‘gods’, to whom the word of God came—and the scripture cannot be broken—what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’?”

In his answer, Jesus was obviously referring to Psalms chapter 82 verses 6 and 7 that they knew very well, which reads as follows:

I said, “You are ‘gods’; you are all sons of the Most High.” But you shall die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler.

(Psalms 82:6-7 NIV)

Thus, as the Judges and prophets of old¹² were called “god” in the metaphorical sense, so did Jesus also refer to himself as “Son of God” in the same vein. It was clear for Jesus (✠) that the term “Son of God” carried no particular import or meaning other than the idiom that the scriptures permitted. There was no case for singling out Jesus as the only “Son of God” or even “god” in a special or literal sense as I was taught in Christianity.

This was why Jesus (✠) in answering the Jews who accused him of claiming to be God (which would be a blasphemy against God), quoted the scriptures saying:

Is it not written in your Law, I have said ‘You are gods’? If he called them ‘gods’, to whom the word of God came—and the scripture cannot be broken¹³ — what about the one whom the

Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'?

Meaning that if God had addressed His prophets with the term "god" then what contradiction¹⁴ is there in Jesus calling himself "Son of God"?

And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. (Exodus 7:1 KJV)

Therefore, if these verses are read within the whole context the meaning becomes very clear. On the other hand, if the same verse, John 10:30 is read out of context then it may look like Jesus claimed to be God. The Glorious Qur'an, the last revelation of God to humanity, however, strongly rejects this Christian dogma that Jesus Christ son of Mary was literally the Son of God. Allah (ﷻ) says:

«The Jews call 'Uzayr a son of Allah and the Christians call Christ the son of Allah. That is a saying from their mouth; [in this] they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. Allah's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth! They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords in derogation of Allah, and [they take as their Lord] Christ the son of Mary; yet they were commanded to worship but One Allah. There is no god but He. Praise and glory to Him: [far is He] from having the partners they associate [with Him].» (Qur'an 9: 30-31)

«They say: [Allah] Most Gracious has begotten a son! Indeed you have put forth a thing most monstrous! At it the skies are ready to burst, the earth to split asunder, and the mountains to fall down in utter ruin, that they should invoke a son for the Most Gracious. For it is not consonant with the majesty of the Most Gracious that He should beget a son.» (Qur'an 19: 88-92)

«To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth: How can He have a son when He has no consort? He created all things, and He has full knowledge of all things. That is Allah, your Lord! There is no god but He,

the Creator of all things: then worship Him: and He has power to dispose of all affairs.﴾
(*Qur'an 6: 101-102*)

So again, I found that reason, logic and common sense were on the side of Islam. Just as one scholar put it, “*Philosophy tells us that no being from which another being can come out, and yet exist as a separate individual and become his equal and partner, can be regarded as perfect.*” To attribute a son to God would be to deny the Perfection of the Creator. Just as Prophet Job (ﷺ) put it very simply and logically, when he said,

How then can man be justified with God? Or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in His sight. How much less man, that is a worm? And the son of man, which is a worm?
(Job 25:4-6 KJV)

The original sin (inherited sin) and repentance

As a Christian, I was taught to believe that sin is inherited right from the first man, Adam, down to our parents and unto us. That is, by disobeying God’s command not to eat of the forbidden fruit of knowledge, Adam sinned and this sin was passed down and inherited by all the children of Adam and so, all human beings are born sinful.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.
(Romans 5:12 KJV)

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:23-24 KJV)

We were also taught that the requirement of God’s justice is that a price has to be paid for every sin. This means that God cannot and will not allow a single sin to go unpunished and therefore the only thing that can wipe out sin is the shedding of blood.

Without the shedding of blood is no remission. (Hebrews 9:22 KJV)

Thus in Christianity, the recompense for sin is death. Therefore death came about due to the sin of our first parents. Had Adam and Eve not sinned, there would be no death; hence this death was the plan of Satan who made Adam and Eve sin. So as Christians, we regarded death as a form of destruction that was originated by Satan not God, because God is love and not destruction or enmity.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23 KJV)

Therefore, according to what I was taught in Christianity, since sin came into this world through one man, Adam, then it was only logical for it to be removed through one man, the second Adam, Jesus Christ (✠). This is how the formula for the concept of atonement was derived. We were taught that when Adam sinned against God he was cut off from God and thus all his descendants were also cut off from God. However, when Jesus came and died on the cross for the sins of the world, humanity was then reconciled to God. This was according to St. Paul's teachings as we find it in his letters to the Romans,

And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. (Romans 5:11 KJV)

Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (Romans 5:18-19 KJV)

We were taught that Jesus Christ the Son of God came from heaven, shed his holy sinless blood, suffered indescribable agony, and died on the cross to pay the penalty for the sins of men. This had

to be so, because Jesus was the only candidate fit for this ordeal. Being infinite God, he alone could pay the infinite price of sin. And so, no one could or can be saved unless he accepts Jesus Christ (✠) as his personal saviour and redeemer.

Everyone was doomed to suffer eternally in hell, (the consequence of his sinful nature), unless he accepted the atonement, which was a free gift made for his sins through the blood of Jesus Christ (✠) shed on the cross. Yet in time, it came to my realisation that these were the teachings of St. Paul, adopted by the church.

Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my Gospel. (II Timothy 2:8 KJV)

After doing much research on this doctrine of the Christian faith, I found that like many other Christian beliefs, the concept of hereditary sin also had no support. This was not only evident in the words of Jesus, but in that none of the earlier prophets had taught this belief. Rather, all the prophets taught that each individual was only accountable and responsible for his or her own actions and sins. For instance, Prophet Moses (✠) taught,

The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: Every man shall be put to death for his own sin. (Deuteronomy 24:16 KJV)

Prophet Jeremiah also taught that sin is not inherited, but rather that everyone is responsible for him or herself.

In those days they shall say no more, the fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But everyone shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. (Jeremiah 31:29-30 KJV)

Prophet Ezekiel also rejected the dogma of Original Sin in the following words,

The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the

iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. (Ezekiel 18:20-21 KJV)

Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions. (Ecclesiastes 7:29 KJV)

Jesus Christ (ﷺ) himself taught that children were innocent and pure; they were born sinless and as such, if they died in their childhood deserved to inherit paradise.

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said, “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hang around his neck, and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” (Matthew 18:1-6 NIV)

I learned from Islam that there is no such thing as ‘Original Sin’, and that all children are pure and sinless at birth. Also, sin is not something to be inherited but is acquired by an individual when he or she goes against the law of God. In fact, I found that according to Islam, human beings have been created with a nature to do good and inclination to do evil. We have the quality of being forgetful and as such, Adam and Eve forgot about the commandment of their Lord Allah and Satan was able to deceive them to the extent of disobeying God. God however, turned to them and taught them words of

repentance. And they repented and hence He forgave them once and for all.

﴿We had already, beforehand, taken the covenant of Adam, but he forgot: and We found on his part no firm resolve.﴾ (Qur'an 20: 115)

﴿But Satan whispered evil to him: he said: O Adam, shall I lead you to the Tree of Eternity and to a kingdom that never decays? In the result, they both ate of the tree, and so their nakedness appeared to them: they began to sew together, for their covering, leaves from the Garden: thus did Adam disobey his Lord, and allow himself to be seduced. But his Lord chose him [for His grace]: He turned to him, and gave him guidance.﴾ (Qur'an 20: 120-122)

﴿Then learnt Adam from his Lord words of inspiration, and his Lord turned towards him; for He is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.﴾ (Qur'an 2: 37)

﴿They said: Our Lord! We have wronged our own souls: If you forgive us not and bestow not upon us Your Mercy, we shall certainly be lost.﴾ (Qur'an 7: 23)

Therefore in Islam, there is no original sin and as such, sin is not inherited. One could rather see it as an original lesson: that one should not allow Satan to trick you as he did your parents. Allah Almighty says about this,

﴿O Children of Adam! Let not Satan seduce you, in the same manner as He got your parents out of the Garden, stripping them of their clothing, to expose their shame...﴾ (Qur'an 7: 27)

﴿Say: Shall I seek for [my] Cherisher other than Allah, when He is the Cherisher of all things? Every soul draws the meed of its acts on none but itself: no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another. Your goal in the end is towards Allah. He will tell you the truth of the things wherein you disputed.﴾ (Qur'an 6: 164)

If one were also to consider this rationally, it would seem a heightened stage of injustice to condemn the entire human race for the sin committed by our first parents thousands of years ago. Sin is the wilful transgression of the law of God or the law of right and

wrong. The responsibility or blame for sin must lie solely on the individual who has committed it, and not on his children.

Man was born and given freewill with an inclination and ability to do evil or to fight against it and do good. Hence it is only when, as an adult male or female, capable of distinguishing between right and wrong; that when man makes the wrong use of his God-given intellect and freewill and falls a prey to his temptation; that sin is born in him.

Otherwise, there have lived many men and women who resisted and conquered evil inclinations and lived their lives in harmony with the will of Allah Almighty. These can be found in the sacred records of Prophets Enoch, Noah, Jacob, John the Baptist, Zechariah, Jesus Christ, and many more (may the peace of Allah be upon them). They lived righteous, perfect and upright lives, as people who feared God and eschewed evil.

That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. (Matt 23:35 KJV)

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. (Luke 1:5-6 KJV)

It is the height of misanthropy and cynicism for children to be considered sinful from the time of their birth. How unreasonable and hard-hearted a man could become if he believed in the dogma of hereditary sin! This is illustrated in the theological dictum of St. Augustine that all unbaptised infants are doomed to burn eternally in the fire of Hell. Until very recently, the unbaptised infants were not buried in consecrated grounds in Christendom, because they were believed to have died tainted with the Original Sin.

Atonement, repentance and salvation

In the Christian doctrine of atonement, we were taught in the church that God's justice requires that a price be paid for the original sin and other sins of men. That for God to pardon a sinner without punishing him would be a denial of His Justice. Just as Reverend W. Goldsack writes:

It should be as clear as daylight to anyone that God cannot break His law: He cannot forgive a sinner without first giving him an appropriate punishment. For if He did so, who would call Him just and equitable?¹⁵

From an Islamic point of view, this understanding shows complete ignorance of the nature of God. God is not a mere judge or king, rather Allah Almighty is the Master of the Day of Judgment, but He is merciful and forgiving at the same time. If He finds some real good in the human being or sees that he is sincerely repentant, and has a real urge to conquer the evil in himself, He may well forgive his shortcomings and sins altogether, as the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) taught:

Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) narrated: I heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) say: «If somebody commits a sin and then supplicates: O my Lord! I have sinned, please forgive me! His Lord says: My slave has realised that he has a Lord Who forgives sins and punishes for it, I have therefore forgiven My slave (his sins). Then the person remains without committing any sin for a while and then again commits another sin and supplicates: O my Lord! I have committed another sin please forgive me. Allah responds: My slave has acknowledged that he has a Lord Who forgives sins and punishes for it, I have therefore forgiven My slave (his sin). Then the person remains without committing any sin for a while and then commits another sin (for a third time) and begs: O my Lord! I have committed another sin, please forgive me. Allah says: My slave knows that he has a Lord Who forgives sins and

punishes for it, I therefore have forgiven My slave (his sin) he can do whatever he likes.» (Bukhari)

This is how merciful and gracious Allah (ﷻ) is to His slaves. This hadith does not in any way mean we have been given a free ticket to sin as we like and persist in committing all kinds of sins. On the contrary, this hadith is a strong encouragement not to lose hope or despair, but to repent continuously to Allah for our sins and human mistakes, and it is also an indication how expansive Allah's gracious love and mercy are. This understanding is also captured in the following words of Allah (ﷻ) as found in part of a long sacred hadith¹⁶:

Abu Dharr reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: «Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, says: ...O My servants, you sin by night and by day, and I forgive all sins, so seek forgiveness from Me and I shall forgive you...» (Muslim)

Thus, according to the earlier scriptures and from the Islamic point of view, people can receive forgiveness of sins through sincere repentance sought directly from God. This is true at all times and in all places. There has never been a need for the intermediary role that Jesus Christ (ﷺ) or Muhammad (ﷺ) are often mistakenly said to play in our attaining absolution through atonement. All this cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be seen as a violation of His Justice. After all, the only true motivation for punishing a person is to check the evil in him and reform the offender. To punish a person for his past sins even after he has sincerely repented and reformed himself would be a sign of vengeance, not justice. A god whose 'justice' requires compensation for every fall and sin of a man is no better than a Shylock.

The God that I learnt about in Islam, whom we worship, is one full of love and mercy. When He prescribes a law and a way to be followed and obeyed, it is not for His benefit but rather for man's. When He punishes man for his faults and sins, it is not for His own satisfaction or sadistic pleasure, but only to check the evil in man and purify him.

«Whoever works righteousness benefits his own soul; whoever works evil, it is against his own soul: nor is your Lord ever unjust [in the least] to His Servants.» (Qur'an 41: 46)

Hell itself is like a hospital where the spiritually ill-afflicted with the diseases of malice, hatred, selfishness, jealousy, arrogance, greed, dishonesty, drunkenness, miserliness, racism, all kinds of impurities and so forth are cured through the fire of suffering and remorse.

Yet those who have the persistent urge to do good and are sincerely repentant will find Allah Almighty ever ready to forgive and pardon their failings and sins without demanding any compensation from them, or anyone else. And this is exactly what Jesus taught in his beautiful parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the prodigal son.

Moreover, the most important prayer taught by Jesus (ﷺ) shows Allah's readiness to always forgive sinners regardless of whether they can compensate for it or not.

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. (Matt 6:9-13 KJV)

Accordingly, forgiveness of a sinner after punishing him or someone else on his behalf is no forgiveness at all. As I have learnt in Islam, Allah Almighty does forgive sins without punishing us or indeed any other person on our behalf. Thus, if He sees any real goodness in those who have turned away from their sins and reformed themselves, He is ever ready to forgive and pardon.

This kind of forgiveness is not against God's justice but is regarded as true forgiveness. Allah Almighty says,

«If anyone does evil or wrongs his own soul but afterwards seeks Allah's

forgiveness, he will find Allah Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. And if anyone earns sin, he earns it against His own soul: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom. But if anyone earns a fault or a sin and throws it on to one that is innocent, He carries [on himself both] a falsehood and a flagrant sin.﴾

(Qur'an 4: 110-112)

﴿Say: O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah, for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Turn to your Lord [in repentance] and bow to His [will], before the penalty comes on you: after that you shall not be helped.﴾

(Qur'an 39: 53-54)

On the authority of Anas ibn Mâlik (رضي الله عنه), who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) saying: «Allah the Almighty has said: O son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Adam were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and you then face Me, ascribing no partners to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as your sins.» (related by at-Tirmidhi with a sound chain of narration)¹⁷

The Christian scheme of salvation, which I was taught in the church, is that Jesus paid for the original sins and all our subsequent sins when he died on the cross and shed his blood at Calvary. Also, that without belief in the saving power of his blood, there is no salvation.

However, after becoming a Muslim, when I went through this doctrine slightly more critically, I actually discovered many things. Among them was that St. Paul's theological understanding was actually on the basis of a crucified Messiah and this is the understanding upon which Paul built his whole theology, which became the foundation of all Christian teachings. Paul said in his Epistles,

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10 KJV)

For Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness to everyone that believeth. (Romans 10:4 KJV)

So also is the free gift not like the offense. For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. (Romans 5:15 KJV)

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (Romans 5:19 KJV)

Paul nailed the law and commandments on the cross and claimed that Salvation could only be attained through the grace of God and believing in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He wrote in his letters,

Having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us, he took it away, nailing it to the cross. (Colossians 2:14 NIV)

But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. (I Corinthians 1:23 NIV)

For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished. (Romans 3:23-25 NIV)

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord", and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are

justified and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. (Romans 10:9-10 NIV)

And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God; for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. (1 Corinthians 15:14-19 NIV)

In other words, according to St. Paul, there is nothing that Christianity can offer mankind other than the blood and gore of Jesus Christ (ﷺ). If Jesus did not die; and he was not resurrected from the dead, then there can be no salvation in Christianity, for all one's good deeds are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6) as I was taught in the church.

This kind of dogma is not only a denial of the mercy of God but also a denial of His abundant Love. To demand a price of blood in order to forgive the sins of men is to show a complete lack of love and mercy; and to punish a man, an innocent man, for the sins of others, whether the former is willing or not is the height of injustice. This is what I believed for many years, as a Christian.

Jesus Christ (ﷺ) did not die on the Cross

Going through the Gospels and the Qur'an, I found that it is not historically acceptable to say that Jesus Christ (ﷺ) willingly gave himself to die on the cross for the sins of humankind. There are numerous passages in the Bible to the contrary. In fact, when we read the Bible we come to the conclusion that Jesus was not ready to die for anybody's sins. The following are just a few of those passages indicating that Jesus never at any time wanted to die,¹⁸

Jesus Christ (✠) was reluctant to die!

When Jesus (✠) came to know that his enemies were looking for and plotting to kill him, he worked out a defence strategy to repel the Jews who wanted to eliminate him, because he wanted to stay alive.

Then Jesus asked them, “When I sent you without purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?” “Nothing,” they answered. He said to them, “But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you have no sword, sell your cloak and buy one. It is written: ‘and he was numbered with the transgressors; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfilment.’” The disciples said, “See Lord, here are two swords.” “That is enough,” he replied. (Luke 22:35-38 NIV)

Jesus replied, “Friend, do what you came for.” Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. With that, one of Jesus’ companions reached for his sword drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. (Matthew 26:50-51 NIV)

Jesus beseeched God for help

With strong cries and tears Jesus Christ prayed so earnestly for God to keep him alive,

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. (Matt 26:36-39 KJV)

Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. (Luke 22:42-44 KJV)

God heard the prayers of Jesus

The above-mentioned passage means that God accepted his prayers and answered them so as to keep him alive.

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of reverent submission. (Hebrews 5:7 NIV)

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? (Matt 7:7-11 KJV)

An Angel of God was sent to strengthen Jesus

This was in the hope and belief that God would save him and keep him alive!

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (James 5:16 NIV)

An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. (Luke 22:43 NIV)

Pilate finds Jesus not guilty of the charges against him

When Pilate went through the charges against Jesus, he could not find any fault with the man. This was considered good reason to keep him alive.

Pilate saith unto them, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" They all say unto him, "Let him be crucified." And the governor said, "Why, what evil hath he done?" But they cried out the more, saying, "Let him be crucified." When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it." Then answered all the people, and said, "His blood be on us, and on our children." (Matt 27:22-25 KJV)

Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death." (Luke 23:13-15 NIV)

*Jesus was supposedly on the cross
for only three hours*

According to the system in vogue, of fastening a man on the cross by crucifixion, no man could die by crucifixion in such a short time, which means even if Jesus was fastened on the cross - he must still have been alive when he was taken down.

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachtani?" — which means "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:45-46 NIV)

Two of Jesus' 'Cross-mates' were alive

The two other people who were crucified together with Jesus were found to be alive on their respective crosses. So Jesus too, for the same reason, having been on the cross for the same period of time, must also have been alive.

The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead they did not break his legs. (John 19:32-33 NIV)

There must have been a mistake in deeming Jesus to be dead already. They did not have use of a stethoscope; neither did the soldiers feel his pulse nor heartbeat. It is possible therefore that he could have been in a coma, but they assumed on first sight of Jesus, that he was already dead.

Forthwith came out blood and water

When the soldiers made this assumption, they pierced him with a spear on his side and immediately blood and water came out, which was a sure sign that he was alive!

But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, they shall look on him whom they pierced. And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. (John 19:33-38 KJV)

Thunderstorm, earthquake, and darkening of the sun

When Jesus Christ (ﷺ) was put on the cross, there was a thunderstorm, an earthquake, and the sun darkened. All these happened within three hours in order to disperse the sadistic mob who had gathered to watch him, and to enable his 'secret disciples' to help keep him alive!

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. (Matthew 27:51 NIV)

It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. (Luke 23:44-45 NIV)

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, and going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. (Matthew 28:1-4 NIV)

﴿And [the unbelievers] planned and plotted [to kill Jesus] and Allah also planned and Allah is the best of planners [to keep Jesus alive].﴾

(*Qur'an* 3: 54)

The Jews doubted whether Jesus was dead

The Jews suspected that Jesus had escaped death on the cross because he had only stayed on the cross for three hours. They also suspected that since his cross mates were alive, he must also for the same reason be alive. Moreover it was his secret disciple Joseph of Arimathea who sought Pilate's permission to take the body, and put it in a roomy spacious tomb and not a grave. All these signs made the

Jews suspicious that Jesus was still alive.

The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. “Sir,” they said, “We remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body, and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first.” (Matthew 27:62-64 NIV)

The question is what was the “first error” that the Jews made in trying to eliminate Jesus (✠) and what would be the “last error” that they were trying to avoid? Most probably the first error was permitting Jesus to be brought down from the cross without breaking his legs like the other two cross mates, under the false assumption that the soldiers “saw” that he was dead already. The last error which would be worse than the first would have been to allow the ‘secret’ disciples of Jesus to render help to the wounded Jesus (✠), by not sealing off the tomb. Yet in the meantime, in their hurry to do away with Jesus (✠), they made a third mistake which was to approach Pilate the next day instead of immediately on the same day, which was obviously too late! God works in mysterious ways. Our ways are not His ways. The Jews’ plan was foiled for they made too many mistakes. “Haste makes waste,” as the saying goes.

Pilate marvels to hear that Jesus is dead

Pilate knew very well from experience that no man could die so soon by crucifixion. He also suspected that Jesus must have been alive.

Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave

the body to Joseph. So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped him in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. (Mark 15:44-46 NIV)

Stone and winding sheets had to be removed

The stone covering; used to secure and confine Jesus (☩) inside the tomb; was found to have been removed from its mouth and the winding sheets that were used to wrap the body of Jesus were also found inside the tomb. Surely these measures would only have been necessary if Jesus was indeed still alive?

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. (Matthew 28:1-4 NIV)

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:1-5 NIV)

The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith

unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulcher. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw, and believed. (John 20:1-8 KJV)

The fact that the angel came down from heaven and rolled the stone away from the tomb clearly proves that Jesus was not resurrected from the dead. If he had been, there would have been no need for the stone to be rolled away from the mouth of the tomb because resurrected bodies are spiritualized and thus can pass through a wall or a key hole and not necessarily through the open door of the tomb.

The disciples were petrified upon seeing Jesus alive

All the knowledge the disciples had about the 'crucifixion' ordeal was from hearsay, they were not eyewitnesses to the happenings because at this most critical juncture in Jesus' life they all forsook him and fled. They therefore they could not believe that he had been seen alive.

And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely. And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him. And they laid their hands on him, and took him. And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off

his ear. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled. And they all forsook him, and fled. (Mark 14:44-50 KJV)

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, "Peace be unto you." But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, "Why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, "Have ye here any meat?" And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them. (Luke 24:36-43 KJV)

The fact that Jesus had a physical body, which had flesh and bones, and more so that he ate earthly food too in the very sight of his disciples, all goes to prove the point that he was not what they thought. They thought he had died and had now been resurrected (come back from the dead) and so were frightened to see him. His behaviour and reaction however all proved the contrary; that is that he never died. He was the very same Jesus, alive not resurrected.

The miracle of Jesus was like that of Jonah

Jesus had himself foretold that he was not going to die under the hands of his enemies. The miracle of his remaining alive when he was expected to die by crucifixion was going to be like the miracle of Prophet Jonah (ﷺ) who was swallowed by the whale. Jonah (ﷺ) was also expected to die but Jonah was vomited out of the whale's belly alive.

Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. (Matt 12:38-41 KJV)

According to the Book of Jonah in the Bible, when he was thrown into the raging sea, logically he was expected to die. In fact, had he died, there would have been no miracle. He was praying to God in the whale's belly and the All-Merciful God answered his supplication and saved him. After three days he was vomited on the sea shore alive. In a similar manner Jesus (✝) was fastened to the cross and therefore he was expected to die. If he had died on the cross then there would have been no miracle as Jesus foretold with reference to the miracle of Prophet Jonah: that it would be similar to his miracle. So, just as Prophet Jonah (✝) prayed to God for help to be saved so did Jesus do the same and the same God who saved Jonah from the whale's belly saved Jesus from the cross alive and so, Jesus said:

A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign!
But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.
For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matthew 12:39-40 NIV)

As mentioned before, I found that the dogma of Atonement was used as a way of salvation but is a complete denial of God's abundant love, mercy and justice. To demand a price of blood in order to forgive sins is to show a complete lack of mercy. Moreover, to punish an innocent man for the sins of others is like a physician breaking his

own head to cure the headache of his patients. I found that the idea of substitution or vicarious sacrifice is illogical, meaningless and unjust.

Furthermore, the idea that shedding blood is necessary to appease the Wrath of God came to Christianity from primitive man's image of God as an all-powerful demon. There is absolutely no connection between sin and blood. What is necessary to wash away sins is not blood but sincere repentance, persistent struggle against evil inclinations, good character and behaviour towards fellow human beings and upholding the will of Allah in all our life as taught by Jesus Christ (ﷺ) and all other prophets.

For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. Like Adam, they have broken the covenant — they were unfaithful to me. (Hosea 6:6-7 NIV)

Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. (John 15:3-14 KJV)

From the above teachings we can clearly see that Jesus (ﷺ) came to rescue men from sin not by dying for them on the cross but by commanding them to follow his teachings and his example of righteousness. This is why when a young man came and asked about the way to salvation in the hereafter, he answered him as follows,

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. (Matt 19:16-17 KJV)

In his answer Jesus (ﷺ) mentioned nothing to do with his atoning sacrifice and the redeeming power of his blood as I was taught in the church, but rather for the young man to keep the commandments. Accordingly, the way to salvation and eternal life is by sincerely believing in God, eschewing evil and doing good deeds, not by accepting Jesus (ﷺ) as a personal saviour through his redeeming blood atonement.

In my quest for the truth I found that Islam completely and strongly rejected this dogma of blood atonement for salvation and declared that forgiveness of sins cannot be obtained by the suffering and sacrifice of any other person, human or divine. It is attained by the grace of God and our own sincere and persistent efforts to fight against evil and by doing good. Allah Almighty says,

﴿Namely, that no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another; That man can have nothing but what he strives for; That [the fruit of] his striving will soon come in sight.﴾
(Qur'an 53: 38-40)

﴿Who receives guidance, receives it for his own benefit: who goes astray does so to his own loss. No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another nor would We visit Our Wrath until We had sent a messenger [to give warning].﴾
(Qur'an 17: 15)

Islam's scheme of salvation to be attained in the hereafter is based on:

- (i) The grace of God
- (ii) True and sincere faith in God and not lip service faith
- (iii) Good works that are the fruits of sincere true faith
- (iv) Repentance of sins committed; whether major or minor; before one dies.

In this respect, Allah Almighty says in several verses of the glorious Qur'an,

﴿But We shall save those who guarded against evil and leave the wrongdoers therein [in hellfire, humbled] to their knees.﴾ (Qur'an 19: 72)

﴿O you who believe! Follow not Satan's footsteps: if any will follow the footsteps of Satan, he will [but] command what is shameful and wrong: and were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah on you, not one of you would ever have been pure: but Allah does purify whom He pleases: and Allah is One Who hears and knows [all things].﴾ (Qur'an 24: 21)

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) is also reported to have taught about salvation based on the grace of God and good works (righteous deeds). Abu Dharr al-Ghifârî (رضي الله عنه) narrated from the Prophet (ﷺ) that Allah (ﷻ) has said: «My slaves, I have forbidden oppression for Myself and have made it forbidden amongst you, so do not oppress one another. My slaves, all of you are astray except for those I have guided, so seek guidance from Me and I shall guide you. My slaves, all of you are hungry except for those I have fed, so seek food from Me and I shall feed you. My slaves, all of you are naked except those I have clothed, so seek clothing from Me and I shall clothe you. O My slaves, you sin by night and by day, and I forgive all sins, so seek forgiveness of Me and I shall forgive you. O My slaves, your attempts at harming Me will not harm Me, and your attempts at benefitting Me will not benefit Me. O My slaves, were the first of you and the last of you, the human of you and the jinn of you to be as pious as the most pious heart of any one of you, that would not increase My kingdom in anything. O My slaves, were the first of you

and the last of you, the human of you and the jinn of you to be as wicked as the most wicked heart of any one of you, that would not decrease My kingdom in anything. O My slaves, were the first of you and the last of you, the human of you and the jinn of you to rise up in one place and make a request of Me, and were I to give everyone what he requested, that would not decrease what I have, any more than a needle decreases (the amount of water in) the sea if put into it (and then taken out). O My slaves, it is only your deeds that I reckon up for you, so let one who finds good praise Allah and let one who finds other than that blame no one but himself.» (Muslim)

‘Â’ishah (the Prophet’s wife, may Allah be pleased with her) narrated: The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately, and receive good news because one’s good deeds will not make him enter paradise. They asked: Even you, O Allah’s Messenger? He said: Even I, unless and until Allah bestows His pardon and mercy on me.» (Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated: Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said: «Your deeds will not save you (from hell). They asked: Even you (will not be saved by your deeds), O Allah’s Messenger? He replied: No, even I (will not be saved) unless and until Allah bestows His mercy on me. Therefore, do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately, and worship Allah in the forenoon and in the afternoon and during a part of the night, and always adopt a middle, moderate, regular course whereby you will reach your target (paradise).» (Bukhari)

This was the humility of all the messengers of Allah. This humility is evident also in the character of Jesus (ﷺ) as quoted before when a rich ruler came and called him ‘good master’. He declined to be called good teacher or master and said, “None is good except one, that is God alone, but if you want to enter into eternal life keep to the commandments.” (Matt. 19:16-17)

According to the verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths quoted we can see that there is a direct link between the divine grace of God, faith and righteous deeds. God's mercy is not arbitrary: it could not cause a disbelieving evil wretched person to enter paradise while causing a noble believing soul to go to hell.

Such a state of affairs would deny people's free will and make the Day of Judgment meaningless. Allah's wisdom and justice work along with His grace and mercy. There is of course an aspect of His infinite mercy that covers all creatures, both deserving and undeserving. However, the greater part of the infinite mercy of Allah is reserved as grace for the righteous believers in the next life.

﴿Do no mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order, but call on Him with fear and longing [hope in your hearts]: for the mercy of Allah is [always] near to those who do good.﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 56)*

﴿And ordain for us that which is good, in this life and in the hereafter: for we have turned unto You. He said: With My punishment I visit whom I will; but My mercy extends to all things. That [mercy] I shall ordain for those who do right, and practice regular charity, and those who believe in Our Signs.﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 156)*

Narrated Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه): I heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) saying: «Verily Allah created mercy. The day He created it, He made it into one hundred parts. He withheld with Him ninety-nine parts, and sent its one part to all His creatures. Had the non-believer known of all the mercy which is in the Hands of Allah, he would not lose hope of entering paradise, and had the believer known of all the punishment which is present with Allah, he would not consider himself complaisant and safe from hellfire.» (Bukhari)

Thus, I learnt in Islam that the key which grants entry to paradise through Allah's grace and mercy are none other than what I have already mentioned. First and foremost of these is sincere faith in the one true God who alone deserves our devotion and worship. Secondly, it is the performance of righteous deeds that are prescribed

by Him. Lastly it is sincere and true, consistent repentance. This has been neatly summed up by Allah Almighty in the following verses,

﴿And those who, having done something to be ashamed of, or wronged their own souls, earnestly bring Allah to mind and ask for forgiveness for their sins — and who can forgive sins except Allah? — And are never obstinate in persisting knowingly in [the wrong] they have done. For such the reward is forgiveness from their Lord and gardens beneath which rivers flow [in paradise], an eternal dwelling: how excellent a recompense for those who work [and strive]! Many were the ways of life that have passed away before you: travel through the earth and see what was the end of those who rejected Truth. Here is a plain statement to people: a guidance and instruction to those who fear Allah.﴾
(*Qur'an* 3: 135-138)

﴿Those who reject faith will suffer from that rejection: while those who work righteousness have prepared for themselves [places in paradise], in order that He may reward those who believe and work righteousness out of His grace. For surely He does not love those who reject faith.﴾
(*Qur'an* 30: 44-45)

Thus, it is due to the grace of Allah that His doors of repentance are wide open as they were to our first parents who were deceived by the Devil. When they forgot the commandment of Allah, they sinned against Him but were taught words of repentance and they repented and asked for Allah's forgiveness who graciously forgave them once and for all. Thus began the concept of repentance as was later taught by all the prophets including John, Jesus and Muhammad (peace be upon them all). And therefore Allah, the Almighty, All-Merciful continuously reminds us to repent to him and ask for His forgiveness for our sins.

﴿O you who believe! Turn to Allah with sincere repentance: in the hope that your Lord will remove from you your ills [misdeeds] and admit you to gardens beneath which rivers flow; the Day that Allah will not permit to be humiliated the Prophet and those who believe with him. Their light will run forward before them and by their right hands, while they say: Our Lord!

Perfect our light for us, and grant us forgiveness: for You have power over all things.» (Qur'an 66: 8)

«O believers, turn you all together towards Allah, that you may attain bliss.» (Qur'an 24: 31)

According to this understanding, Allah Almighty deliberately created humankind with an inclination to do wrong, so that pardoning those who turn to Him in repentance would be a channel through which Allah's divine attributes of mercy, grace and forgiveness would be made manifest in His creation. Allah says,

«Indeed Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.» (Qur'an 2: 222)

Muhammad (ﷺ), the last messenger of Allah, not only complied with these commands, but also urged his Companions and all those who believe in him to turn regularly to Allah in repentance.

Ibn 'Umar reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: «O people, repent to Allah. Verily, I turn in repentance to Him a hundred times a day.» (Muslim)

Balance sheet for the true followers of Jesus' teachings

Do you worship God alone? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Matthew 4:10 (KJV) also (Luke 4:8)

Then saith Jesus unto him, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Do you know that Jesus is not God? ☐ Yes ☐ No

John 5:37 (KJV)

And the Father himself, which sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape.

John 8: 39-40 (KJV)

Jesus saith unto them, if ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard from God: this did not Abraham.

John 17:3 (KJV)

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Numbers 23:19 (KJV)

God is not man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent...

Do you know that Jesus never claimed divinity?

☐ Yes ☐ No

John 5:30 (KJV)

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

John 8:28 (KJV) "I do nothing of myself."

John 14:28 (KJV) "My father is greater than I."

Mark 12:29 (KJV) "The Lord our God is one Lord."

John 13:16 (KJV)

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than He that sent him."

John 20:17 (KJV)

“Jesus saith unto her, touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God.”

Do you know that Jesus is not the Son of God?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Luke 22:48 (KJV)

But Jesus said unto him, “Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss.”

Matthew 12: 40 (KJV)

For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Luke 3:38 (KJV)

...which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

Matthew 5: 9 (ASV)

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God.

Romans 8:14 (KJV)

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Do you refrain from worshipping Jesus?

☐ Yes ☐ No

John 4:23-24 (KJV)

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Matthew 15:8-9 (NIV)

“These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.”

Matthew 7:21-27 (KJV)

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Matthew 26:36-39 (KJV)

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

Luke 11:2-4 (KJV)

And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

Do you refrain from bowing down to statues?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Exodus 20:4-5 (KJV)

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them...

Do you follow the Ten Commandments? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Matthew 5:17-19 (KJV)

Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Mark 12:29 (KJV)

And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord.

Matthew 19:16-17 (KJV)

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto

him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

Do you know that Mark and Luke are not named among the twelve apostles? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Matthew 10:2-4 (KJV)

Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; the first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus; and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

Do you know the Holy Spirit did not inspire the writer who wrote Luke? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Luke 1:1-3 (KJV)

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus.

Do you know the teachings of Paul are not Jesus' teachings? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Romans 7:6 (KJV)

Paul said: But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

Romans 10:4 (KJV)

For Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness to everyone that believes.

Colossians 2:14 (NIV)

Having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us, he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

Matthew 5:17-18 (KJV)

Jesus said: Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Do you know Eternal Life is linked to believing in Jesus as a Messenger of God and obeying God's commandments? ☐ Yes ☐ No

John 17:3 (KJV)

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

John 5:24 (KJV)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Matthew 19:16-17 (KJV)

And behold one came and said unto him (Jesus), "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" And he said unto him, "Why do you call me good? There is none good but One, that is God. But if thou wilt enter eternal life, keep the commandments."

Luke 10:25-28 (KJV)

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the Law? How readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, thou hast answered right; do this, and thou shalt live.

Do you know that you cannot claim to be 'saved' by your faith alone but by faith and righteous works together?

☐ Yes ☐ No

James 2: 14-26 (KJV)

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith (alone) save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and

had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Do you ask only God to forgive your trespasses (sins)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Mark 11:25-26

And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Do you know that no man (not even Jesus) can carry the burden (of sins) of another? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Deuteronomy 24:16

The father shall not be put to death for the children, nor shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

Jeremiah 31:29-30 (KJV)

In those days they shall say no more, the fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But everyone shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eats the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.

Ezekiel 18:20-21 (KJV)

The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

Do you know Jesus prayed to God to remove the cup (of death) and that his prayer was answered? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Luke 22:42-44 (KJV)

“Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

Hebrews 5:7 (NIV)

During the day of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of reverent submission.

Do you know Jesus had no power to do anything on his own accord? ☐ Yes ☐ No

John 8:28 (Good News Bible)

“I do nothing on my own authority, but I say only what the Father has instructed me.”

Luke 11:20 (Good News Bible)

No, it is rather by God's power that I drive out demons, and this proves that the kingdom of God has already come to you.

Acts 2:22 (NIV)

“Men of Israel listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as yourselves know.”

Do you know that Jesus' message was not for all people?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Matthew 10:5-6 (KJV)

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Matthew 15:21-28 (KJV)

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Do you know that Jesus had no biological father, yet two contradicting genealogies are given for him, both tracing his ancestry through Joseph, the husband of Mary?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Matthew 1:6-16 mentions 25 forefathers between Abraham and Jesus. Luke 3:23-31 mentions 52 forefathers between Abraham and Jesus.

Do you greet brothers/sisters in faith with the words "Peace be with you" as taught by Jesus and all other prophets? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Luke 24:36 (KJV)

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

John 20:26 (NIV)

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and the Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you".

Do you bow down to the ground on your face in prostration to God when you pray as Jesus and other prophets did? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Matthew 26:39 (KJV)

And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed... Also Joshua 5:15, 1 Kings 18:42, Numbers 20:6, Genesis 17:3

1 Corinthians 14:25 (KJV)

And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God.

Do you fast as Jesus and all the Prophets did?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Matthew 9:14-15; Mark 2:18-20; Luke 5:33-35; Exodus 34:28

Jesus insisted that fasting was not suitable for his disciples as long as he, the Bridegroom, was with them.

Matthew 4:2 (KJV)

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

Do you know drinking wine and alcoholic drinks is prohibited? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Luke 1:15 (KJV)

For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

Romans 14:21 (KJV)

It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

Ephesians 5:18 (NIV)

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads you to debauchery; instead, be filled with the spirit.

Do you know that eating pork is prohibited and Jesus cast demons into pigs? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Leviticus 11:7-8 (KJV) and Mark 5:1-11

And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be cloven-footed, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you. Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcass shall ye not touch; they are unclean to you.

Do you know male offspring should be circumcised according to the way of Jesus and all other prophets? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Genesis 17:10-11 (KJV)

This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be

circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

Both John the Baptist (Luke 1:59) and Jesus (Luke 2:21) were circumcised.

Do you know the use of usury (interest) is forbidden?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Leviticus 25:36-37 (KJV)

Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee. Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase.

Exodus 22:25 (NIV)

If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not be like a money-lender; charge him no interest.

Psalms 15:5 (KJV)

He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

Do you disapprove of homosexuality? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Genesis 19:24-25 (KJV)

Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

Do you know that erecting a (Christmas) tree is a Pagan custom? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Jeremiah 10:2-4 (KJV)

Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers that it move not.

Chapter Four

ISLAM: A UNIVERSAL WAY OF LIFE

Islam: The religion of all prophets

After embracing Islam I realised that one of the most important duties in Islam is to seek authentic Islamic knowledge. Knowledge sets one free from biases, superstitious beliefs, narrow-mindedness, hasty judgments and so forth. It also liberates one from the enslavement of the mind. The more books I read on Islam, the more I felt that Islam was simply natural and close to my heart, as if it was something I had been yearning for and believed in but was not informed of by anybody.

The more I read, the more I wanted to read and this feeling has never stopped, all praise and thanks be to Allah. The feeling that I will never know enough still lingers in my mind and so the reading continues.

In this process of reading I discovered that what I was taught in the church about Islam was not true. They taught that Islam is *Mohammedanism*, a religion that began in Saudi Arabia and was brought by Muhammad, that it is the religion of Arabs who worship Muhammad.

I found that Islam was not only the religion brought by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) but it was in fact the religion of all the Prophets. For indeed, all the Prophets from Adam, the first Prophet, up to Muhammad the last Prophet and Messenger to humanity were all Muslims in the sense that they all submitted their will to the Will of God. They had come with the same message of *tawḥeed* (the belief in

the unity of God). Thus Prophets Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad were all brothers in faith, the descendants of Prophet Noah.¹⁹

«The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah — that which We have sent by inspiration to you — and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: that you should remain steadfast in religion, and make no divisions therein.» (*Qur'an* 42: 13)

Narrated Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه): Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: «Both in this world and in the hereafter, I am the nearest of all the people to Jesus, the son of Mary. The Prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one (i.e., Islamic Monotheism).» (Bukhari)

We note here that the five major Prophets and Messengers are the ones mentioned in the above verse. However, even though the verse does not mention exactly which religion they were commanded to establish, when we refer to other verses of the Glorious Qur'an mentioning each of these major Prophets and Messengers separately, it becomes very clear that the religion they were commanded to establish which is referred to in the above verse, is none other than Islam.

Prophet Abraham and his descendants were Muslims

«Abraham was neither a Jew nor yet a Christian, but he was true in faith, and bowed his will to Allah's [which is Islam] and he joined not gods with Allah.» (*Qur'an* 3: 67)

«And who turns away from the religion of Abraham but such as debase their souls with folly. Him We chose and rendered pure in this world; and he will be in the Hereafter, in the ranks of the righteous. Behold! His Lord said to him: Bow [your will to Me]. He said: I bow [my will] to the Lord and Cherisher of the Universe. And this was the legacy that Abraham left to his sons and so did Jacob [saying]: O my sons! Allah has chosen the Faith for

you: then die not except in the state of submission [to Allah]. Were you witnesses when death appeared before Jacob? Behold, he said to his sons: What will you worship after me? They said: We shall worship your God and the God of your fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, the One [True] God: to Him we bow [in Islam]. That was a people that has passed away. They shall reap the fruit of what they did, and you of what you do! Of their merits there is no question in your case! They say: Become Jews or Christians if you would be guided. Say you: Nay! [I would rather] the religion of Abraham, the True, and he joined not gods with Allah. Say you: We believe in Allah and the revelation given to us and to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Tribes and that given to Moses and Jesus and that given to [all] Prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them, and we bow to Allah [in Islam]. So if they believe as you believe, they are indeed on the right path; but if they turn back, it is they who are in schism, but Allah will suffice you against them, and He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [Our religion is] the Baptism of Allah. And who can baptise better than Allah? And it is He whom we worship. Say: Will you dispute with us about Allah, seeing that He is our Lord and your Lord; that we are responsible for our doings and you for yours; and that we are sincere [in our faith] in Him? Or do you say that Abraham, Ishmael, Jacob, and Tribes were Jews or Christians? Say: Do you know better than Allah? Ah! Who is more unjust than those who conceal the testimony they have from Allah? But Allah is not unmindful of what you do! ﴿

(Qur'an 2: 130-140)

Prophet Jesus and his disciples were Muslims

﴿When Jesus found unbelief on their part he said: Who will be my helpers to [the work of] Allah? Said the Disciples: We are Allah's helpers: we believe in Allah, and do you bear witness that we are Muslims﴾ (Qur'an 3: 52)

Prophet Noah and those who believed were Muslims

﴿Relate to them the story of Noah. Behold! He said to his people: O my

people, if it be hard on your [mind] that I should stay [with you] and commemorate the Signs of Allah — yet I put my trust in Allah. Get you then an agreement about your plan and among your partners, so your plan be not to you dark and dubious. Then pass your sentence on me, and give me no respite. But if you turn back [consider]: no reward have I asked of you: my reward is only due from Allah, and I have been commanded to be of those who submit to Allah's will [in Islam].» *(Qur'an 10: 71-72)*

Prophet Joseph was a Muslim

«O my Lord! You have indeed bestowed on me some power, and taught me something of the interpretation of dreams and events; O Creator of the heavens and the earth! You are my protector in this world and in the hereafter. Take You my soul [at death] as one submitting to Your will [as a Muslim], and unite me with the righteous.» *(Qur'an 12: 101)*

Prophet Solomon was a Muslim

«[Solomon] said: Soon shall we see whether you have told the truth or lied! Go you, with this letter of mine, and deliver it to them, then draw back from them, and [wait to] see what answer they return. She said: O elders, here is — delivered to me — a letter worthy of respect. It is from Solomon, and is [as follows]: In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful: Be you not arrogant against me, but come to me in submission [to the true religion].» *(Qur'an 27: 27-31)*

Islam: The name of the true religion

Through my reading, I also came to know that many religions were either named after a person's name, title, or a tribe or a town. For example, Judaism was named after the tribe of Judah in Judea, Christianity after Jesus Christ, Hinduism after the Hindus, Buddhism after Gautama Buddha, Confucianism after Confucius and Marxism

after Karl Marx. However, this was not the case with Islam because there was no such thing as Mohammedanism, rather the name 'Islam' was of divine origin. It directly came from Allah the Almighty and was expressly mentioned in several passages of the Glorious Qur'an.

﴿The religion before Allah is Islam [submission to His will]...﴾

(*Qur'an* 3: 19)

﴿If anyone desires a religion other than Islam [submission to Allah], never will it be accepted from him; and in the hereafter, he will be in the ranks of those who have lost.﴾

(*Qur'an* 3: 85)

﴿This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.﴾

(*Qur'an* 5: 3)

Hence, I discovered that Islam did not claim to be a new religion brought by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ into Arabia in the seventh century as is commonly misunderstood. Rather, Islam is a re-expression in its final perfect form of the true religion²⁰ of God given to all Prophets of God from Adam through to Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace be upon them all).

Islam: A peaceful and tolerant religion

Another discovery that struck me was that contrary to popular image the media portrayed — that Islam is a religion of war and violence — I found Islam to be a very reasonable and peaceful way of life. It is not aloof from reason, it is a missionary faith that enjoins its followers to preach their religion peacefully and establish dialogue on the common grounds of wisdom, good preaching and understanding.

﴿Say: O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah.²¹ But if they turn back, say you: Bear witness that we [at least] are Muslims [bowing to Allah's will].﴾

(*Qur'an* 3: 64)

«Reville not those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they, out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance. Thus have We made alluring to each people its own doings. In the end they will return to their Lord and We shall then tell them the truth of all that they did.»
(*Qur'an* 6: 108)

«Invite [all] to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for your Lord knows best who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance.»
(*Qur'an* 16: 125)

«And dispute you not with the people of the Book, except with means better [than mere disputation] unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong [and injury], but say: We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; our God and your God is One and it is to Him we bow [in Islam].»
(*Qur'an* 29: 46)

«Who is better in speech than he who calls people to Allah, works righteousness, and says: I am of those who bow in Islam? Nor can goodness and evil be equal. Repel [evil] with what is better: then will he, between whom and you was hatred become as it were your friend and intimate! And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint — none but persons of the greatest good fortune.»
(*Qur'an* 41: 33-35)

Furthermore, I found Islam to be more tolerant than either Judaism or Christianity. Muslims are taught to believe in all Prophets and Messengers without discriminating, looking down or rejecting others. In fact, one would not be a true Muslim unless he believed in all the Prophets that God inspired, including Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (may Allah's peace be upon them).

«Say: We believe in Allah and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes and in [the Books] given to Moses, Jesus and the Prophets from their Lord: we make no distinction between one and another among them and to Allah do we bow our will [in Islam].»
(*Qur'an* 3: 84)

Islam not only allows Muslims to eat the food slaughtered and prepared by Jews and Christians, but furthermore, Muslim men are allowed to marry chaste women from these religious groups. I discovered that Muslims were the closest in love and compassion to the Christians.

«Strongest among men in enmity to the Believers will you find the Jews and Pagans; and nearest among them in love to the Believers will you find those who say: We are Christians; because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant. And when they listen to the revelation received by the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears, for they recognise the truth: they pray: Our Lord! We believe; write us down among the witnesses. What cause can we have not to believe in Allah and the truth that has come to us, seeing that we long for our Lord to admit us to the company of the righteous?»

(Qur'an 5: 82-84)

«This day are [all] things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. [Lawful unto you in marriage] are [not only] chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book, revealed before your time — when you give them their due dowers²², and desire chastity, not lewdness, nor secret intrigues.»

(Qur'an 5: 5)

Islam: A moderate and balanced way of life

I also found that unlike all other cultures and ways of life, Islam is a moderate religion neither going to the extreme right nor left. Rather it is balanced in all its facets just as Allah Almighty says,

«Thus have We made you an Ummah justly balanced, that you might be witnesses over the nations and the Messenger a witness over yourselves.»

(Qur'an 2: 143)

The Arabic word mentioned in this verse that is translated as 'justly balanced', actually means 'moderate' or 'middle ground'; it

implies fairness and justice. It also means being the best. A common Arabic proverb says, “The best of all things is their middle.” Thus, I found that Islamic moderation leads to a balanced way of life for the physical body, spiritual soul and intellectual mind. It incorporates belief in God, belief in the angels, belief in prophethood, belief in the jinn, belief in fate and predestination, salvation and life after death. All these articles of faith play a balancing role in the life of one who has accepted and then practices Islam.

Islam balances between material and spiritual life, not favouring one or the other but rather encouraging one to work harder in both domains, for life in the hereafter. Allah Almighty says,

﴿But seek, with the [wealth] which Allah has bestowed on you, the Home of the Hereafter, nor forget your portion in this world, but do you good, as Allah has been good to you, and seek not [occasions for] mischief in the land: for Allah loves not those who do mischief.﴾ (Qur'an 28: 77)

Muslims are taught that material life is a very short one, of a hundred years or a hundred and forty years at most, whereas the next life is an eternal one.

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) is reported by Ibn ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) to have held him by the shoulders and said to him, «Be in this world as though you are a stranger or a traveller. And Ibn ‘Umar used to say: When you have reached the evening do not eagerly wait for the morning, and when you have reached morning do not eagerly wait for the evening. Take from your health for your illness and from your life for your death.» (Bukhari)

I learnt that in the same way a believer in Allah Almighty should take from this worldly material life, out of dwellings, possessions and companions, only that which will ease his passage to the next life. However, he should not see this life as a mere passing cloud or a mere crossing but also an opportunity to obtain for himself the best eternal home for which he longs, much as a stranger or a traveller longs for his home, wife and children after a long absence. And thus the reality

of this worldly life is what one believing man told the subjects of Pharaoh:

«O my people! This life of the present is nothing but [temporary] convenience: it is the hereafter that is the abode that will last.»

(*Qur'an* 40: 39)

‘Abdullâh ibn Mas‘ood (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «To try to earn a lawful livelihood is an obligation like the other obligations in Islam.» (Bayhaqi)

Al-Mikdam ibn Madikarib (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «No one eats better food than that which they have earned by their own labour, and even David, the Prophet of God, used to eat from what he had earned by his own hands.» (Bukhari)

The Prophet’s Companions once noticed a man’s fortitude and perseverance at work and said: O Messenger of Allah, this man would be really wonderful if only his actions were for the cause of Allah. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «If he goes out to work to support his young children, his old parents, or even for the satisfaction of his own needs, (then) all his work is regarded as a struggle in the cause of Allah. But if he goes out in order to boast and be proud, it is in the cause of the Devil.» (Bukhari)

The Prophet (ﷺ) is also reported to have said, «There are some sins that are not forgiven except by supporting your family (feeding them) from lawful work.»

And Allah Almighty said that after the Friday congregational worship, believers should go back to work to earn a lawful material life.

«And when the prayer is has ended, then may you disperse through the land, and seek the bounty and celebrate the praises of Allah often [and without stint]: that you may prosper.»

(*Qur'an* 62: 10)

Thus I learnt that Islam strikes a balance between material life and spiritual life, for the Islamic teaching says, “Strive for your material

worldly affairs as if you are going to live forever and strive for your hereafter, spiritual life as if you are going to die tomorrow.”

I also found that there is moderation and balance in what Islam teaches about sovereignty belonging only to Allah and the role of a human being as God’s representative on earth, not as a legislator. This is in direct contrast to our current situation whereby human beings have become legislators and indeed challenge Allah Almighty in His realm of legislation by making up their own laws that are detrimental to human well-being. Islam strikes a moderate position by instructing humankind to retain certain timeless principles given to them by their Creator that help regulate their desires. At the same time, humans are allowed to use their intellect to reach their own judgment and ruling on circumstances that arise.

However, this aspect may not be fully understood without considering the various aspects of Islamic law, such as the rationale and purpose behind Islamic law, the sources of Islamic law and the essential principles of Islamic law.

In my quest to understand Islam, I also learnt that Islam strikes a balance in conduct and ethics. Thus, Islam avoids extremes in moral obligations; it neither advocates utopian idealism nor an austere realism. Islam does not demand a life of perfect conscience, nor does it advocate a life controlled by human desires and whims that lead to debauchery and indulgence. Rather, Islam provides human beings with ways of cultivating their conscience to instil love, God-consciousness (a positive sense of fear of God akin to love) and devotion to Him.

Islam promotes high ethical and moral values exemplified by a great human being, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).²³ In this respect, the Prophet (ﷺ) once questioned young ‘Abdullâh, son of the famous ‘Amr ibn al-‘Âs (رضي الله عنه), and a Companion of the Prophet, because he had become known for his extreme self-denial. The Prophet (Blessings and peace be upon him) came to know of the punishing

routine he had resorted to and so he asked him:

«O ‘Abdullâh, have I not been informed that you fast during the day and offer prayers all the night? ‘Abdullâh replied: Yes, O Allah’s Messenger! The Prophet said: Do not do that; fast for few days and then give it up for few days, offer prayers and also sleep at night, as your body has a right on you, and your wife has a right on you, and your guest has a right on you. And it is sufficient for you to fast three days in a month, as the reward of a good deed is multiplied ten times, so it will be like fasting throughout the year.” (‘Abdullâh said:) I insisted (on fasting) and so I was given a hard lesson, for I said: O Allah’s Messenger! I have power (to do more). The Prophet said: Fast like Prophet David did, and do not fast more than that. I asked: How did David the Prophet of Allah fast? He (ﷺ) replied: Half of the year (that is, he used to fast every other day). Later, when ‘Abdullâh grew old, he used to say: It would have been better for me if I had accepted the permission of the Prophet (which he gave me; that is to fast only three days a month).» (Bukhari)

Islam: A simple, perfect and natural way of life

As I studied Islam, it became clear that it is a perfect and natural way of life, one that is simple and practical. It addresses all human affairs and its teachings and doctrines are easy to understand, logical and not contradictory or too complicated for a layman. Islam combines both faith and reason together. Allah Almighty says,

«So set you your face steadily and truly to the Faith: [Establish] Allah’s handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made humankind [fiṭrah]²⁴: [let there be] no change in the work [wrought] by Allah.²⁵ That is the standard religion: but most people understand not.» (Qur’an 30: 30)

«This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.» (Qur’an 5: 3)

«And We have sent down to you the Book explaining all things, a guide, a mercy, and glad tidings to Muslims.» (Qur'an 16: 89)

«And strive in His cause as you ought to strive, [with sincerity and under discipline]: He has chosen you and has imposed no difficulties on you in your religion: it is the religion of your father Abraham. It is He Who has named you Muslims, both before and in this [revelation]: that the Messenger may be a witness for you, and you be witnesses for humanity. So establish regular prayer, give regular charity, and hold fast to Allah! He is your Protector, the best to protect and the best to help.» (Qur'an 22: 78)

Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Religion (Islam) is very easy and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way. So you should not be extremists, but try to be moderate and near to perfection and receive the good tidings that you will be rewarded; and gain strength by worshipping in the mornings, the nights.» (Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Every child is born with a true faith of Islam (that is, to worship none but Allah alone) and his parents convert him to Judaism or Christianity or Magianism. As an animal delivers a perfect baby animal: do you find it mutilated?» (Bukhari)

All Praises be to Allah Almighty who not only guided me to Islam but also guided both of my elderly parents, all my brothers, my sister and their families. Had it not been for His grace and mercy we would not be Muslims. And our last words are in accordance to the words of Allah.

«Praise be to Allah, Who has guided us to this [felicity]: never could we have found guidance, had it not been for the guidance of Allah.» (Qur'an 7: 43)

«Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate now after You have guided us, but grant us mercy from Your own presence; for you are the Grantor of bounties without measure.» (Qur'an 3: 8)

﴿Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error; our Lord! Lay not on us a burden like that which You did lay on those before us; Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear. Blot out our sins, and grant us forgiveness. Have mercy on us. You are our Protector; help us against those who stand against Faith.﴾ (Qur'an 2: 286)

Notes

- ¹ That is why there have been several massacres in NEP, the Wajir massacre of 1966, Mandera, Elwak and most recently 14th July 2005 in Marsabit-Turbi in which a hundred people were massacred including women and children. This has come as a result of the injustice and negligence perpetrated against the people of the region by successive Kenyan regimes.
- ² A large lorry with a large oval-shaped cylindrical tank at the back for carrying ten thousand or more litres of clean drinking water, used for carrying water from distant places.
- ³ *Shahâdah* means to accept with full conviction in your heart and bear witness with your tongue that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah alone who has no associates and to accept Muhammad (ﷺ) as the last and final Prophet and Messenger and that Jesus is also a prophet and messenger of Allah and a spirit created by Allah and a word from Allah bestowed upon the virgin Mary, that he is neither God nor the son of God. For a full exposition of the meaning and conditions of Shahâdah, refer to my book *The Seven Conditions of Shahâdah*.
- ⁴ Athanasius of Alexandria (2008) *Athanasian Creed*, Bibliobazaar
- ⁵ Rev J. F. De Groot, *Catholic Teaching* p. 101, as quoted in Ulfat Samad (1984) *Islam and Christianity*, p. 43, Presidency of Islamic Research
- ⁶ Samad (1984), *Islam and Christianity*, p. 45, who quoted “The Holy Trinity”, *The New Catholic Encyclopaedia* (1967), vol. 14, p. 295
- ⁷ Ibid. p. 46, who quoted “The Holy Trinity”, *The New Catholic Encyclopaedia* (1967), vol. 14, p. 299
- ⁸ Allah is not like an apple that can be divided into three thirds that forms one whole.
- ⁹ Ibid. p. 50 who quoted Rev. J. F. De Groot, *Catholic Teaching*, p. 149
- ¹⁰ According to Biblical scholars ‘Q’ stands for German Quelle — meaning the source of a lost document in Aramaic, which reached the Gospel writers in a Greek translation.
- ¹¹ According to Biblical scholars ‘Urmarcus’ is another source — meaning Primitive Mark: an earlier draft of Mark’s Gospel written on the basis

of Peter's discourses about Jesus.

- ¹² Prophet Moses was referred to in Exodus 7:1 as 'god' when he was sent to Pharaoh.
- ¹³ Meaning that you cannot contradict me on the fact that prophets were called 'Gods'
- ¹⁴ Which scripture had Jesus broken by calling himself 'god' or 'Son of God', when prophets of old like Moses and others were addressed in the same terms?
- ¹⁵ Rev. W. Goldsack, *The Atonement*, p. 5 as quoted by Aziz-Us-Samad Ulfat in *Islam and Christianity*, p. 65
- ¹⁶ A 'sacred hadith' (Ar. hadith qudsi) is a hadith communicated to Prophet Muhammad through revelation by Allah, but it is not part of the Qur'an. (Editor)
- ¹⁷ An-Nawawi's *Forty Hadith* (Arabic-English) Ezzeddin and Davies, pp. 126-127
- ¹⁸ For a more comprehensive analysis on whether Jesus Christ was crucified or not, read Ahmed Deedat (1984), *Crucifixion or Crucifiction*, Abul Qasim Publications
- ¹⁹ (Qur'an 17: 3)
- ²⁰ Philips, A.A.B., *The True Religion*, Project of Islamic Propaganda, 1995 p. 9
- ²¹ By obeying another in disobedience to Allah
- ²² the specified bridal gift
- ²³ Please refer to my book *Forty Hadith on Good Moral Values*, International Islamic Publishing House, Riyadh, 2010.
- ²⁴ The natural inborn inclination of humans to worship their Creator prior to the corruption of their nature by external influences. Thus, Islamic monotheism is described as the religion of *fiṭrah* — that of the inherent nature of humankind.
- ²⁵ i.e. let people remain true to their *fiṭrah* within the religion of Islam.

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<<http://www.biblegateway.com>>, January 2010)

Glossary of Islamic terms*

<i>abu (or abi)</i>	أبو، أبي	father (of)
<i>âmeen</i>	آمين	O Allah, accept our invocation; amen
<i>angel</i>	ملاك	A being made of light who is totally obedient to Allah and has no free will; Allah has assigned some angels specific tasks, like those who record our good and bad deeds, the Angel of Death, the guardians of hell, etc.
<i>as-salâmu 'alaykum</i>	السلام عليكم	a greeting, which means 'peace'
<i>fiṭrah</i>	فطرة	the natural inclination (of humans) instilled by Allah
<i>Hadith (ḥadeeth)</i>	حديث	the collected statements and actions of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that with the Qur'an form the basis of Islamic law
<i>hadith (ḥadeeth)</i>	حديث	a statement or action of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that was remembered and recorded by his Companions and followers
<i>Jinn (plural of jinni)</i>	جن	non-human, rational beings created by Allah from fire, often referred to as

* The Arabic words are transliterated according to the conventions of the Transliteration Chart found in this book. If a word has become part of the English language (i.e., is found in a dictionary of Standard English), that spelling is used in this book and appears first in this Glossary, with the transliterated form in brackets after it.

‘demons’ or ‘devils’; They have free will like humans: some are Muslims, others disbelievers; some are obedient to Allah, others disobedient. Satan is a jinni. Some people try to ‘foretell’ the future by contacting a jinni. Some disobedient jinn mislead people into thinking that they can tell them what will happen in the future, near or far, or that the jinn can provide people with riches or some sort of power.

<i>prophethood</i>	النبوة	The term ‘prophethood’ is not in the English dictionary, but is an invented term, formed along the pattern of ‘childhood’ and ‘motherhood’, as a noun reflecting a particular state of being. It is meant to translate the meaning of the Arabic word <i>nubuwwah</i> , which has no one-word equivalent in English, but which could be translated as meaning ‘the state of being a prophet’, and is also used to refer to ‘all things that have to do with being a prophet’. The term ‘prophethood’ has since become common in English-language Islamic discourse.
<i>shahâdah</i>	الشهادة	testimony, <i>usu.</i> the statement <i>Lâ ilâha illâ Allâh, Muḥammadun rasool Ullâh</i> [There is none worthy of worship other than God (Allah); Muhammad is the Messenger of God]
<i>tawḥeed</i>	التوحيد	the Oneness of Allah: that He alone deserves to be worshipped and that He has no partners